



## United States Senate Budget Committee

**JEFF SESSIONS | Ranking Member**

May 5, 2011  
For Immediate Release  
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# As Markup Nears, Republicans Appeal To Conrad Not To Conceal Budget Plan From Public, Members

*“Rushing a budget through the Committee, without a meaningful opportunity for public review or careful consideration from members of this body, is simply not acceptable. We owe the American people better than that.”*

**WASHINGTON—U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL), Ranking Member of the Senate Budget Committee, joined by all of the Committee’s Republican Senators, wrote today to reiterate to Chairman Kent Conrad the Senators’ belief that any budget markup should be conducted in an open and transparent manner. The Senators’ requests include having the text posted online in advance and making staff available to answer questions in committee (as was the case until recently) about the resolution’s content.**

A text of [the letter](#) follows:

May 5, 2011

Dear Chairman Conrad,

We are pleased that you announced your intention to mark up a Senate budget resolution next week. The unprecedented size of our \$14 trillion debt and the severe threat it poses to our country necessitate that this Committee meet as soon as possible

to begin working on a responsible, disciplined budget that brings Washington spending under control.

Given the importance of this budget, on April 26 we requested that the Chairman's proposal be released and posted online no less than 72 hours before we first meet to mark up the budget so that Committee members, as well as the public, could review and ask questions about it. We also requested ample time to offer amendments in open public meetings. We are disappointed you have not responded to these requests despite the fact you intend to conduct a mark-up as early as Monday, May 9, 2011.

It is our continued belief that the most important budget we will have ever worked on requires the most open process we have ever had. Rushing a budget through the Committee, without a meaningful opportunity for public review or careful consideration from members of this body, is simply not acceptable. We owe the American people better than that.

Therefore, we reiterate our request for a 72-hour review and adequate time to offer and publicly debate amendments. That would mean providing and posting a proposal online by this Friday, May 6, if you intend to start a mark-up on Monday, May 9. If you are unwilling to do this, we would ask that you provide a response explaining why you feel such a request in these challenging times is not appropriate, and exactly when you do plan to make your proposal available to members of the Committee, the press, and the public. Last year your proposal was not shared with the Committee until opening statements were being delivered.

We are also deeply concerned that staff experts may not be allowed to participate in the public meeting and to answer questions before we propose amendments so that members and observers can better understand the nature and background of the proposal and the baseline it adopts. As you know, this is a common practice in many Congressional committees, including the House Committee on the Budget, and was practiced by our Committee until only a few years ago.

We understand that you have already briefed your caucus on your budget plan. But with a mark-up only days away it is essential that members on both sides of the aisle are given an opportunity to evaluate the proposal on behalf of those we represent.

You have historically supported inclusive government decision-making. Our desire is to make sure this budget, which has the potential to dramatically impact the future

course of our nation, is subject to robust public scrutiny and debate. In this time of growing fiscal crisis and deepening fears about the future, the American people deserve an honest budget and an open budget process.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and welcome any questions you may have regarding these requests.

Sincerely,

Jeff Sessions, Ranking Member

Charles Grassley

Michael B. Enzi

Mike Crapo

John Cornyn

Lindsey Graham

John Thune

Ron Johnson

Pat Toomey

Rob Portman

[Note: To view the Senators' previous letter, please [click here](#).]

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